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AUTHOR Mussano, Frank
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ABSTRACT

Second semester freshmen living in dormitories at York College (Pennsylvania) were administered the Organization Survey and Study Techniques Survey, and these results were compared with the students' overall grade-point averages (GPAs). The results indicated a clear positive correlation between study organization and GPA, and a significant positive correlation between study techniques and GPA. Questions regarding organization of the study area produced a slightly higher percentage of incorrect responses as compared to those items dealing with effective use of study time. The subcategories of the Study Techniques Survey that produced the largest percentage of incorrect responses were: taking class notes, taking tests, writing reports, preparing for tests, and reading textbooks. It is recommended that a study skills workshop be developed for resident freshmen. Subscale responses should be used in establishing goals and priorities. (Author/MSE)

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ED139347

# The Correlation Between Study Skills and General Academic Achievement For Freshmen Dormitory Residents

CORE MODULE

Applied Educational Research and Evaluation

by

Frank Mussano, M.Ed.

York College of Pennsylvania

CLUSTER COORDINATOR

Dr. Kenneth Miller

CLUSTER

Eastern Pennsylvania

A PRACTICUM PRESENTED TO NOVA UNIVERSITY
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ABSTRACT

Mussano, Fran P. The Correlation Between Study Skills and General Academic Achievement For Freshmen Dormitory Residents. Research Practicum Presented to Nova University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education, May 10, 1977.

The study examined the correlation between: a) study organization survey results and overall grade point average, b) study techniques survey results and overall grade point average, for second semester freshmen living in dormitory facilities at York College of Pennsylvania. All 247 freshmen residents were administered the Study Organization Survey and the Study Techniques Survey. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient was utilized to compare survey scores of the 91 respondents with grade point average.

The results indicated that a clear positive correlation existed between Study Organization Survey scores and G.P.A. A significant positive relationship between Study Techniques Survey results and G.P.A. was also established. Questions regarding organization of one's study area produced a slightly higher percentage of incorrect responses as compared to those items dealing with effective use of one's study time on the Study Organization Survey. The subcategories of the Study Techniques Survey which produced the largest percentage of incorrect responses were, respectively: taking class notes, taking tests, writing reports, preparing for tests, and reading textbooks. It was recommended

that a study skills workshop be developed for resident freshmen. Sub-scale responses should be utilized in establishing goals and priorities.

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# INTRODUCTION

## Statement of the Problem

This paper examined the correlation between study skills and academic achievement for all 247 second semester freshmen living in dormitory facilities at York College of Pennsylvania. Two basic questions were attacked:

1) Was there a significant positive correlation between study organization survey results and grade point average for second semester freshmen living in York College dormitories?

2) Was there a significant positive correlation between study techniques survey results and grade point average for second semester dormitory residents at York College?

## Significance to York College

As is typical of all institutions of higher education in the late 1970's, York College of Pennsylvania found itself deeply engrossed in the movement towards egalitarianism. The effect has been a proliferation of a wide variation in academic backgrounds for newly admitted students. Just as the College Entrance Examination Board has noted a lowering of scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, many institutions have found that a large number of newly admitted students do not have the academic background necessary to ensure reasonable success in higher education. If adaptive measures are not initiated to assist this new type of student, the ultimate effects upon attrition rate and/or

quality of education could be disasterous.

The Residence Council of York College noted that the attrition rate for resident freshmen has been relatively heavy during the past two years. The Office of Student Affairs observed that ultimately 52% of recent freshmen classes have eventually "dropped out" from the college roster. Among other reasons for this attrition rate, the Residence Council suggested that a main contributing factor could be a lack of developed study skills. The Council agreed to support a study which would confirm the assumed relationship between study skills and grade point average for resident freshmen. In the event that the results are conclusive in this direction, the Residence Council expressed a willingness to consider the establishment and financial backing of an experimental study skills workshop for a select group of resident freshmen during the 1977 fall semester.

In essence then, this study examined the relationship of study skills and grade point average for resident freshmen as a basis for establishing a study skills workshop for new students entering York College dormitories in the fall of 1977.

## BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

A wide variety of studies suggesting a high positive relationship between study skills and general academic achievement have been reported in the recent professional literature. For example, Weinstein and Gipple (1974) administered Wrenn's Study-Habits Inventory (SHI) to 104 freshmen and 78 sophomores at the University of Washington School of medicine. Undergraduate grade-point averages, Medical College Admissions Test scores, and number of failing grades were then gathered on all participants. It was found that study-skills scores were highly related to achievement measures, and the relationship between study-skill score and achievement was greater for freshmen than for sophomores. Also, study-skill factors aided in the prediction of failures.

Entwistle and Wilson (1970) administered the Eysenck Personality Inventory and a questionnaire measuring study methods and motivation to 72 graduates at Aberdeen University. The total group was divided into three equal groups - "good honours", "honours/ordinary", and "poor ordinary." The more successful students rated significantly higher than the poorer students on both study methods and motivation.

Hewitt (1973) administered the Study Habit Biographical Questionnaire, which includes 48 items on study habits, study difficulties, and biographical data to all entering freshmen at a British University. The 93 women and 153 men were divided into three academic levels, and differences between the top and bottom thirds were tested using the chi-square technique. The more successful students in comparison with the

less successful students used books and libraries more frequently, had less difficulty concentrating on their studies, and had received training in note taking.

McCausland and Steward (1974) administered three measures of academic attitudes and study skills - the Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes (SSHA), a 30 item test by Russell, and a 9 item test by Myers - to 47 men and 39 women near the end of an introductory psychology course. Scores were compared with first semester grade-point averages using analyses of variance and multiple linear regressions. Results indicated that the four primary SSHA scales (delay avoidance, teacher approval, work methods, and educational acceptance) accounted for 18 per cent of the variance in first semester college G.P.A., while the full-scale study orientation score accounted for 16 per cent.

An attempt was made to determine if different study strategies were used by successful and unsuccessful students in the same major field. At the University of California, Riverside, 538 upperclass students majoring in the phisical sciences, biological sciences, social sciences, and humanities, filled out a 64-item study skills questionnaire. Respondents were divided into "successful" and "unsuccessful" groups on the basis of self-reported grade-point average. The students with above average grades appeared to be more diligent in their study habits, and showed more cognitive activity than those with below average grades.

Not all studies confirm a clear positive relationship between study methodology and general academic success. Cooper and Foy (1969)

surveyed all 200 University of Bradford, England, undergraduate pharmacy students utilizing 30 questions relative to attitudes toward study and organization of study habits, along with 15 questions measuring study time prior to vacations. Those who attained better grades had not invested much weekend time in study, possibly because weaker students tended to study more on weekends. Also, study time allocated to subjects outside specific course requirements proved to be a liability. No relationship appeared between achievement in examinations and study habits or attitudes.

Entwistle, Thompson and Wilson (1974) interviewed 60 students beginning their final term at the University of Lancaster, England. They investigated motivational factors in three time periods: pre-university experience, university experience, and anticipated post university experience. Then, scores on the Eysenck Personality Inventory and a measure of study habits were obtained. The students were classified into four categories - high achievers, low achievers, overachievers, and underachievers. Results revealed that poor performance occurred among unstable extroverts with poor study methods as well as among stable introverts with good study habits. Particularly successful students were found among unstable introverts with low motivation and poor study methods as well as among stable extroverts with high motivation and good study methods. The researchers concluded that unstable introverts were motivated by fear of failure while stable extroverts were moved by hope for success.

A grade point average was computed for 94 freshmen women who, following their first semester, were administered the Alpert-Haber Achievement Anxiety Test and the Brown Holtsman Survey of Study Habits and Attitudes (Desiderato and Koskinen, 1969). The researchers concluded that specific scales of anxiety appear to predict academic performance more accurately than do general scales, with study habits perhaps serving as a mediating process.

Some research has demonstrated the effect of study techniques upon academic achievement in specific courses. For example, at the University of New Mexico (Fisher and Harris, 1973), 83 women and 29 male students enrolled in human growth classes were randomly assigned to a 40 minute lecture, a 10 minute review period, and a 30 minute testing period under one of the five following conditions: no note taking with review of the lecturer's notes, no note taking with mental review, note taking with mental review, note taking with review of their own notes, and note taking with review of the lecturer's notes. A 15 minute follow up test was administered three weeks after the immediate testing. The researchers concluded that the quality of the notes taken was positively correlated with free recall or objective testing.

A lecture on behavior modification was presented to four separate sections of a sophomore human growth and development course (Annis and Davis, 1975). Three sections received instructions on note taking, while one section received no instructions and were not allowed to review their notes prior to an examination. Students in the instructed sections were

either told to take their own notes, or lectures's notes were provided. The final results indicated that encoding by note taking or using lecturer's notes and review of either set of notes were both associated with higher examination scores. The students who had only mental review or no review did relatively poorly on the exam.

Finally, the literature suggests that students themselves believe that study skills play an important role in academic achievement. Pauk (1972) surveyed 600 randomly chosen college freshmen and asked them to rank, in order of importance, 14 items that have an influence on academic achievement. Instructors, parents, high school preparation, study skills, and friends were the five items ranked highest by both males and females.

Summary of the Literature

The current professional literature suggests the following:

1) Several studies indicate a high positive correlation between proficient study skills and general academic achievement, most notably during the freshmen year.

2) On the other hand, some research suggests that no direct significant relationship can be determined between study skills and academic achievement.

3) Research has demonstrated that effective study techniques can have a significant positive effect upon achievement in specific courses.

4) Students themselves believe that study skills have a direct bearing upon general academic success.

5) Two important aspects of study skills are a) study organization, and b) study techniques.

With this in mind, the researcher administered the Study Organization Survey and the Study Technique Survey to all 247 second semester freshmen living in York College dormitory facilities. Scores on both instruments were separately correlated with current grade-point average, utilizing the Pearson product-moment coefficient analysis, to determine whether or not a significant positive relationship existed between study skills and academic achievement. Significant results between either or both of the surveys and grade-point average were to be used as justification for establishment of a study skills workshop for freshmen dormitory residents.

## PROCEDURE

### Definition of Terms

1) Academic achievement - overall grade point average. (See #5 for further clarification.)

2) Attrition - reduction in student enrollment as a result of academic failure.

3) Dependent variable - grade point average.

4) Drop-out - failure of any student to continue enrollment through graduation.

5) Grade point average - computed by dividing the sum of course credits and weighted grades by the total number of credits. Grades are given the following weights: A = 4; B = 3; C = 2; D = 1; F = 0. For example:

| | Course Credits | | Weighted Grades |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 3 | x | 3 (B) = 9 |
| | 6 | x | 2 (C) = 12 |
| Total | 3 / 12 | x | 4 (A) = 12 / 33 |

33 ÷ 12 = 2.75 Grade Point Average.

6) Independent variables - scores on the Study Organization Survey and the Study Techniques Survey.

7) Intervening variables - values, motivation, maturation, socio-economic status, social adjustment, intelligence, coursework, and in-

structor effectiveness.

8) Subjects - all 247 second semester freshmen living in York College dormitory residence facilities during the 1977 spring semester.

9) Study organization - score on the Study Organization Survey developed by Dr. William F. Brown (1965) which stresses effective use of one's study time, and efficient organization of one's study area.

10) Study skills - separate scores on Study Organization Survey and Study Techniques Survey.

11) Study techniques - score on the Study Techniques Survey developed by Dr. William F. Brown (1965) which assesses common problems associated with reading textbooks, taking class notes, writing reports, preparing for tests, and taking tests.

Limitations of the Study

1) The extent to which the Study Organization Survey scores and the Study Techniques Survey scores accurately reflected study skills proficiency limited the validity of this study.

2) Any of the intervening variables from motivation to social adjustment may have limited the accuracy of this study.

3) The general attitude of the participants in the study at the time the instrument is administered may have limited the accuracy of this study.

4) The extent to which York College freshmen residents reflected the characteristics of students enrolled at other institutions may have limited the external generalizations of results.

5) The fact that there is no control over classroom experiences and instructor effectiveness limited the validity of this research.

6) The extent to which grade point average accurately reflects academic achievement affected the validity of this investigation.

Basic Assumptions

1) It was assumed that the Study Organization Survey accurately measured effective use of one's study time, and efficient use of one's study area.

2) It was assumed that the Study Techniques Survey accurately measured common problems associated with reading textbooks, taking class notes, writing reoprts, preparing for tests, and taking tests.

3) It was assumed that those responding to the survey accurately reflected the characteristics of the 1977 fall semester resident freshman class.

4) It was assumed that the participants validly responded to the measuring instruments.

5) It was assumed that grade point average accurately reflected academic achievement for second semester freshmen.

6) It was assumed that none of the intervening variables adversely affected the validity of this investigation.

Assessment Instruments

The two assessment devices utilized in this investigation were: 1) Study Organization Survey and 2) Study Techniques Survey, both

developed by William F. Brown, Ed.D., and published by Effective Study Materials, P. O. Box 603, San Marcos, Texas. The Manual of Directions (Brown, 1965) points out the following:

"Questions on the Study Organization Survey are divided equally between two problem areas. Questions 1-10 deal with common problems connected with effective use of one's study time; questions 11-20 deal with common problems associated with efficient organization of one's study area.

The twenty-question Study Techniques Survey provides four questions for each of five different problem areas. Questions 1-4, 5-8, 9-12, 13-16, and 17-20, deal, respectively, with the most common problems associated with reading textbooks, taking class notes, writing reports, preparing for tests, and taking tests." (p.1)

Validity and reliability coefficients for the instrument are outlined below:

a) validity - During the fall semester of 1962 and 1963, 1,477 freshmen enrolled at Southwest Texas State College received composit scores on the American College Test, first semester grade point averages for academic courses, and Study Skills Surveys scores. Resulting validity coefficients ranged from .18 to .55.

b) reliability - Test-retest coefficients following a four weeks interval ranged from .89 to .93 for each of the subscales of the Study Skills Surveys.

Procedures for Collecting the Data

1) All 247 second semester freshmen residing in York College dormitory facilities were identified through cross-referencing of the appropriate Housing Office and Records Office listings.

2) Each of the identified freshmen received, through the intercampus mailing system, a personally addressed form letter, a copy of the Study Organization Survey, the Study Techniques Survey, and an answer sheet with the participant's name previously written in the appropriate space. (see appendix)

3) A return envelope was provided for returning completed answer sheets to the main desk of each dormitory.

4) Dormitory supervisors each received a list of those students in his or her building who were selected to participate in the study, to facilitate an informal follow-up procedure.

5) All subjects failing to complete the survey following a five day waiting period were contacted by the supervisor only once, in an effort to increase the volume of response.

6) The 31 completed answer sheets were then scored by hand as outlined in the Manual of Directions. (Brown, 1965)

7) The Records Office provided the latest grade point average for each of the 31 respondents.

8) A chart listing each respondent's name, score on the Study Organization Survey, score on the Study Techniques Survey, and grade point average was constructed to facilitate treatment of the data.

Procedures for Treating the Data

1) A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was utilized to measure the relationship between scores on the Study Organization Survey and grade point average. The following null hypothesis was tested:

The population correlation between scores on the Study Organization Survey and grade point average of second semester freshmen students residing in York College dormitories spring semester, 1977, is equal to 0.

| | |
|---|---|
| Null Hypothesis | $H_o$ : $\rho = 0$ |
| Alternate Hypothesis | $H_a$ : $\rho > 0$ |
| Level of Significance | $\alpha = .05$ |
| Critical r Value (based on t test analysis) | .173 |
| Degrees of Freedom (based on 33% response) | 89 |
| One Tailed Test | .95 percentile value |

$H_o$ will be rejected and $H_a$ accepted if $r > .173$.

2) A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was utilized to measure the relationship between scores on the Study Techniques Survey and grade point average. The following null hypothesis was tested:

The population correlation between scores on the Study Techniques Survey and grade point average of second semester freshmen students re-

siding in York College dormitories spring semester, 1977, is equal to 0.

| | |
|---|---|
| Null Hypothesis | $H_o$ : $\rho = 0$ |
| Alternate Hypothesis | $H_a$ : $r > 0$ |
| Level of Significance | $\alpha = .05$ |
| Critical r Value (based on t test analysis) | .173 |
| Degrees of Freedom (based on 33% response) | 89 |
| One Tailed Test | .95 percentile value |

$H_o$ will be rejected and $H_a$ accepted if $r > .173$.

## RESULTS

The data resulting from the study is as follows:

TABLE I

HYPOTHESIS NUMBER ONE

| | G.P.A. | Study Organization Survey Score |
|---|---|---|
| Number | 91 | 91 |
| Mean | 2.44 | 10.13 |
| Standard Deviation | .73 | 2.54 |

Calculated r value = .22

Critical r value = .17

The above table records the mean and the standard deviation of G.P.A. and Study Organization Survey Scores for the 91 respondants. Since the calculated r value exceeds the critical r value at the .05 level, the null hypothesis was accepted. The researcher thus concluded that there was a positive correlation between scores on the Study Organization Survey and grade point average for second semester freshmen students residing in York College dormitories.

TABLE .I

HYPOTHESIS NUMBER TWO

| | G.P.A. | Study Techniques Survey Score |
|---|---|---|
| Number | 91 | 91 |
| Mean | 2.44 | 12.65 |
| Standard Deviation | .73 | 3.47 |
| Calculated r value = .28 | | |
| Critical r value = .17 | | |

The above table records the mean and standard deviation of G.P.A. and Study Techniques Survey Scores for the 91 respondants. Since the calculated r value exceeds the critical r value at the .05 level, the null hypothesis was accepted. The researcher thus concluded that there was a positive correlation between scores on the Study Techniques Survey and grade point average for second semester freshmen students residing in York College dormitories.

Residual Findings

The breakdown of incorrect responses for each of the subscales of the Study Organization Survey and Study Techniques Survey is listed in the following two tables:

TABLE III

BREAKDOWN OF STUDY ORGANIZATION SURVEY RESPONSES

| Subcategory | % Incorrect Responses |
|---|---|
| Organization of Study Area | 52.5 |
| Effective Use of Study Time | 46.4 |

The above table indicates that questions regarding organization of one's study area produced a slightly higher percentage of incorrect responses as compared to those items dealing with effective use of study time.

TABLE IV

BREAKDOWN OF STUDY TECHNIQUES SURVEY RESPONSES

| Subcategory | % Incorrect Responses |
|---|---|
| Taking Class Notes | 83.3 |
| Taking Tests | 74.8 |
| Writing Reports | 64.3 |
| Preparing For Tests | 53.8 |
| Reading Textbooks | 42 |

The above table indicates that the subscales producing the largest percentage of incorrect responses are respectively: taking class notes, taking tests, writing reports, preparing for tests, and reading textbooks.

## DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is clear that a significant positive correlation was found between scores on the Study Organization Survey and overall grade point average for the 1976 spring semester resident freshmen. For this same group of respondants, a significant positive correlation was also found between total scores on the Study Techniques Survey and overall grade point average. These results agree with much of the research reported in the current literature which suggests that effective study methodology directly relates to academic success.

The residual findings suggest that questions on the Study Organization Survey regarding "organization of one's study area" produced a slightly higher percentage of incorrect responses as compared to the second subscale relating to "effective use of study time." Results from the Study Techniques Survey produced a clearer hierarchy. Those categories producing the largest percentage of inappropriate responses were, from highest to lowest: "taking class notes," "taking tests," "writing reports," "preparing for tests," and "reading textbooks."

The results of this study have been presented to the York College of Pennsylvania Residence Council in an attempt to gain funding for an experimental study skills workshop for 1977 fall semester resident freshmen. It is hopeful that the hierarchy of subscale responses outlined above will prove to be useful in establishing workshop goals and priorities.

It is also suggested that additional research be conducted to examine

the potential of an expanded study skills training program. For example, one might wish to compare a group of randomly selected participants involved in a study skills seminar with an equally matched control group relative to grade point average, before and after treatment. Positive results might encourage the installation of a campus wide developmental course in study skills. An effective program in this area may be particularly attractive in light of today's so called "new students", tightened budgets, and high attrition rates.

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APPENDIX A

Cover Letter

YORK COLLEGE OF PENNSYLVANIA
COUNTRY CLUB ROAD, YORK, PENNSYLVANIA 17405
TELEPHONE (717) 846-7788

April 25, 1977

Dear

The Residence Council, in conjunction with Student Affairs, is interested in sponsoring a brief workshop to assist next year's freshman class in the "art of studying". The first step in this project is to find out which techniques are successfully used by current freshman residents, and in what manner the physical environment in the residence halls could best be improved.

You have been selected as a representative of the resident freshman class. We are asking you to take five minutes to answer the enclosed "yes or no" questions on the answer sheet. Please place the completed answer sheet in the envelope provided, and leave it at the main desk of the dorm.

We certainly appreciate your cooperation. Results will be made available as soon as the tabulations are completed. Incidently, no names will be used.

Sincerely,

Residence Council and
Student Affairs Division

RC/cr